



## **Election Modernization Committee**

Date: Tuesday, July 20, 2021

Time: 7:30 PM - 9:00 PM

Location: Conducted by Remote Participation

### **Minutes**

Attendance: Greg Dennis, Juli Brazile, Lesley Waxman, Walter Horn, Juhan Sonin, Patti Muldoon, Paul Parravano, Adam Badik, Giovanna DeStefanis, Bill Logan, Rebecca Gruber, Len Diggins, Jennifer Susse

#### **1. Executive Order on Remote Participation**

Greg took attendance and reviewed the Governor's executive order for remote participation

#### **2. Draft Minutes for Review, Edits, and Approval - Tue, June 29, 2021**

Paul moved approval with one change and they were approved.

#### **3. Letter to Secretary of State about AutoMARK terminals**

Paul presented his draft letter that we discussed based on Adam's suggestion at the previous meeting. Paul is still net-working with other communities and exploring new technologies. Paul will follow up with SOC's office as mentioned in the letter and hopes a meeting will allow him and others attending with him to stress the urgency for real change instead of the next version of the AutoMark. Adam wonders if this letter is in scope. Juli confirmed that we are charged to "review the status of voting equipment and make recommendations for possible improvements." Lesley and Paul would both like a PDF of the signed letter to share with other groups. Imagecast accessibility add-on Lesley will research more.

This is our first letter as a committee. Paul noted that we could send a joint letter with the Disability Commission, but it would have to go on their agenda for discussion and approval creating a delay. Adam moved to send on town letterhead and Len proposed that we check with Town Counsel and this was approved. Juli will coordinate with Doug Heim.

#### 4. Status of Reprecincting

Juli gave an update. Bill Logan asked what the choices are - choose 16 or 21? Juli noted that Diane Mahon suggested 12 precincts at 3 locations, which would keep 252 Town Meeting Members (12 x 21 members = 252, which Len liked. Jennifer asks who has to approve this and the answer is the Select Board. Jennifer notes Juli will need to identify reasons for the change and spell out the positive outcomes. Various concerns and questions:

Patti: not sure about one warden closing two precincts. Juli would bring in closers.

Patti: EMC, LWV, and SB need to kick off serious communication and conversations. How can EMC help?

Lesley: should we do something ourselves so it's not just the SB hearing? Len supports that.

Patti: mix of smaller discussions with influencers like the Moderator and large presentations with breakouts for small discussion on Zoom.

Greg: Can Patti take the lead on developing a proposal? Patti would love help: Juli, Jennifer, Len will meet to plan a virtual forum. Len or Jennifer will approach the new Civic Engagement Group.

Walter: status of House and Senate Bills? No updates.

Adam: it's hard to draw fair maps with larger precincts; the wealthiest residents of a precinct can have an outsized influence.

Adam: are census blocks available to the public to play with? We need models that allow us to understand the impacts of different configurations.

#### 5. Status of Home Rule Petitions

Our article to change Town Meeting elections approved at the Special Town Meeting in 2020 had a hearing and it went well. Nothing reported out yet, but Rep. Sean Garballey expects it will be approved. Our Ranked Choice Voting article from the Annual Town Meeting in 2021 was

submitted to the Legislators. Sean will confer with Sen. Cindy Friedman and they will file the bill.

#### 6. Voting Reform Cost Discussion

Juli is continuing to track down details on election costs in her budget and will talk to Sandy Pooler to understand the various costs the Town has related to elections. Patti wants to know if the Clerk's Office will take more of the responsibility for staffing the polls. Juli thinks probably yes. Greg asked Juli to invite Sandy to our August meeting to discuss.

#### 7. Envision Arlington Survey Questions

Juhan presented an overview of past survey questions from 2019 and 2020 that cover elections and resident engagement with Town Elections and Town Meeting. Our next survey could try to engage the large number of people who do not vote in town elections to find out why not.

Outreach around the survey is a major consideration because the people who take it already engage with civic matters more than average. We can ask Town Meeting Members to assist. Juhan suggests the Town consider micro surveys - 1 or 2 questions that can be sent via text and answered on a phone in a few seconds. This would help if the Town could find ways to invite more new residents to subscribe to texts or emails. Putting non-binding questions on ballots could increase interest in local elections. Len wants to talk to the Chamber of Commerce about their outreach to new residents.

Other possible topics on the survey: Len would include climate issues because they are topical and we could get help from Sustainable Arlington for outreach. Walter wants to hear from Giovanna. Although the previous survey didn't support lowering the voting age, she confirmed she's interested in talking to HS groups about working on getting younger people the right to vote. Greg notes we are talking about voting in town elections only. Giovanna says she didn't know about the previous survey and not sure her parents knew either. Approach Superintendent to get in her newsletter early. Jennifer and Juhan will talk offline and discuss how to involve the new Civic Engagement Group. Len says the town does a lot of surveys so fatigue could be a factor. Paul suggested we consider if we can engage people at churches or at sports fields. Juhan will work on

draft questions and invite members to review them before the next meeting. Giovanna, Walter, Juhan will be a sub-committee to talk about HS engagement. Approved. Minuteman students and Sunrise Arlington might want to be involved with the high school project.

#### 8. Review of Ranked Choice Voting in New York City

Greg reviewed New York City's adoption and implementation of Ranked Choice Voting. Turnout was up in raw numbers from 2013, the last competitive mayor race. They elected a more diverse city council (POC, LGBTQ, Muslim-American, immigrants, younger members). Len asked about early voting. Greg thinks it was up. RCV impacted city council races and there were instances of joint campaigning.

#### 9. Public Comment and/or Questions

Rebecca is interested in outreach and reprecinting. She shares Adam's concern about demographics in larger precincts. She feels that precincts a Town Meeting Member (TMM) can walk is preferred and she did that when she ran. She was shocked that other TMMs told her not to campaign like that. How do you get to know everyone in a larger precinct? And she shares Len's concern (shared at a previous meeting) that seating TMMs by having the TMMs with the most votes in the 3-yr seats creates a stronger cohort making it more difficult in future cycles for challengers. However it is specifically required in state law.

#### 10. New Business

Paul asked that we return briefly to Item 3 on the agenda. Should we copy anyone on the letter such as the Disability Commission, the Manager or the Select Board? Juli will ask Doug. Paul wants the signed PDF tomorrow.

Jennifer proposes discussion of implementation and education around Ranked Choice Voting on the April 2020 ballot, but we have to wait for Home Rule to pass.

Greg will send a Doodle poll to determine dates for our August Meeting.

## 11. Adjournment

Adjourned at 9:32 pm